

# Future Glory

## Ice-Breaker

1. What's the worst pain you've ever been in?
2. As a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
3. When you have a bad day, what lifts your spirits?

## Scripture Passage

### Romans 8:18-27

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because<sup>[a]</sup> the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

## Bible Study

1. What "wait" makes you groan: Red light? Dr.'s office? Check-out line?
2. What are your expectations of the future?
3. What do you think Paul means by "the glory" to come?
4. Why do we as Christians "groan"?
5. What reasons for hope do you find in this passage?
6. Do you know someone who prays regularly for you? Who is someone you pray for? How does it make you feel to know the Spirit intercedes for you?
7. What "present sufferings" are you struggling with? What have you found helpful in dealing with pain and suffering?

## Reference Notes

**8:18-27** The transition in Paul's thought from the former section (8:1-17) to this new section (8:18-27) really occurs at verse 17, where his focus shifts from the fact that Christians are the children of God to the fact that Christians are the heirs of God. The idea of inheritance leads to the theme of verses 18-27: the hope which people have who are indwelt by the Spirit of God. In 8:18-27, Paul first discusses what is hoped for (vv. 18-21). He then sets this hope of glory over against the pain of the present (vv. 22-25). He ends by pointing out that the Holy Spirit "groans" alongside those who groan (due to their suffering). It also needs to be noted that "This subsection will hardly be properly understood, unless the poetic quality displayed in it, particularly in verses 19-22, is duly recognized" (Cranfield).

**8:18 *I consider***. This could be translated, "I reckon." Paul has used this same Greek word in 3:28 ("we maintain") and in 6:11 ("count"). In each case, he means by it a firm conviction which can be worked out logically from the Gospel message. ***sufferings / glory***. Paul defines the basic contrast that will be the subject of verses 18-27. His point: one's future glory (inheritance) vastly outweighs one's present distress (sufferings). ***present sufferings***. That is, the persecutions that Christians face in the time between Jesus' first coming and his return. These are real; not pleasant, but slight in comparison with the glory ahead.

**8:19-21** The fate of humanity and fate of the universe are intertwined. Just as through Adam's sin creation also fell (Genesis 3:17), so too through the redemption of the sons of Adam creation will itself be restored (Revelation 22:3). In this section, Paul has in view the second coming of Christ, at which time all that Christians now experience partially will be theirs completely. See 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and Philippians 3:20-21.

**8:19 *eager expectation***. The image is of a person with excited anticipation scanning the horizon for the first sign of the coming dawn of glory. The only other occurrence of this word in the New Testament is in Philippians 1:20. ***for the sons of God to be revealed***. Christians are indeed sons and daughters of God here and now in this life. What Paul refers to here is the fact that they are, as it were, incognito. It will only be at the Second Coming that it is revealed for all to see who are, in fact, the children of God.

**8:20 *For***. Verses 20-21 explain why the creation waits with such eagerness for this revealing. ***the creation***. The whole of the nonhuman world, both living and inanimate. ***was subjected***. The verb tense indicates a single past action. See Genesis 3:17-19. ***frustration***. The inability of creation to achieve the goal for which it was created; that of glorifying God; because the key actor in this drama of praise (mankind) has fallen. This word is also translated "vanity," which is used extensively in the book of Ecclesiastes. ***in hope***. There was divine judgment at the Fall, but this was not without hope. One day, it was said, the woman's offspring would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

**8:21 will be liberated.** Creation will be freed from its frustrating bondage at the time of the Second Coming when the children of God are freed from the last vestiges of sin. **bondage to decay.** All of creation seems to be running down; deterioration and decomposition now characterize the created order.

**8:22 pains of childbirth.** Such pain is very real, very intense, but also temporary (and the necessary prelude to new life). The image is not of the annihilation of the present universe, but of the emergence of a transformed order (Revelation 21:1). Childbirth was a Jewish metaphor for the suffering that would precede the coming of the new age (Isaiah 26:17).

**8:23 firstfruits.** Generally this term refers to those early developing pieces of fruit that were harvested and given to God, but here the idea is of a gift from God to people. The experience by the believer of the work of the Holy Spirit is a pledge that one day God will grant all that he has promised. **we ... groan inwardly.** One groans not just because of persecution, but because one is not yet fully redeemed. Believers' bodies are still subject to weakness, pain and death. The believer therefore longs for the suffering to end and for the redemption of the body to be complete. **we wait eagerly.** In one sense a Christian is already an adopted child of God, but in another sense he or she has yet to experience fully his or her inheritance.

**8:24-25** Hope is connected with patient endurance as in Romans 5:2-5.

**8:26 what ... to pray.** It is not clear whether this refers to one's inability to know what one ought to pray, or to the problem of knowing how to pray.

**8:26-27** Human frailty affects even prayer. Sometimes feelings are so deep and so inexpressible that it is the Holy Spirit himself who must pray for an individual. "Prayer is the Divine in us appealing to the Divine above us" (C. H. Dodd).

## Caring Time

1. In waiting for what you hope, how do you rank on the patience scale: From 1 (I want it right now!) to 10 (the patience of Job)?
2. What is your biggest concern about the future? About the coming week?
3. How would you like the group to pray for you this week?